

# To Buy or Not to Buy?

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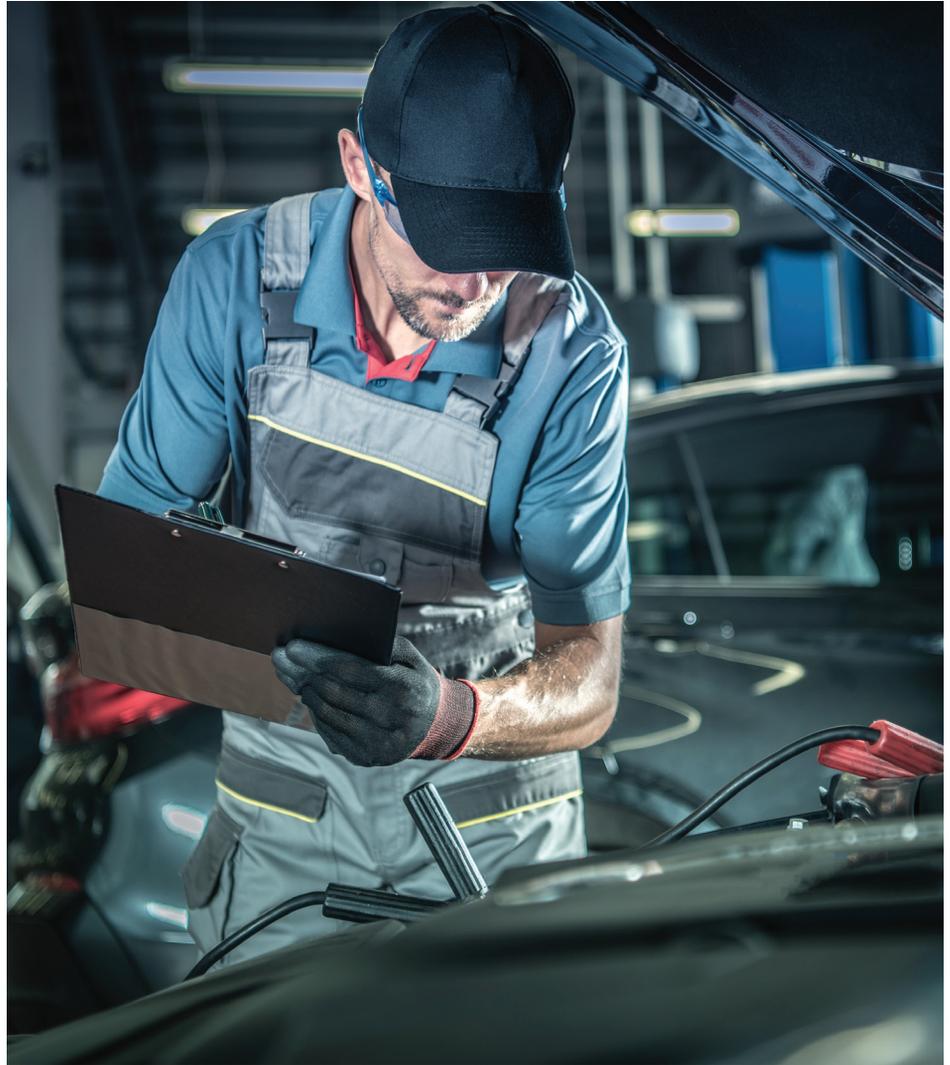
***“We would not recommend purchasing this vehicle.”***

That line was the advice we delivered to a potential buyer after a pre-purchase inspection on a beautiful looking Jeep Liberty. That line was from a previous article I wrote concerning – Pre-Purchase inspections.

The reason the technician made that recommendation was he found a cooling system full of stop-leak. At some point the vehicle probably had a small leak and the owner figured the easiest and most cost-effective way to end the problem would be to put stop-leak into the cooling system.

The problem with this solution is that it will certainly stop the leak in the radiator, but it can also reduce the effective flow of coolant through the smaller passageways of the radiator and even the engine. A clogged radiator will lead to overall high temperatures, restricted passageways in the engine can result in localized hot spots that will not be detected by your temperature gauge and overheat issues for the life of the engine.

We had a customer’s car that came to us with overheating problems and when we pulled the cylinder heads, we found many of the coolant passageways nearly or completely blocked by



the stop-leak product. In order to ensure there would not be long-term overheating problems, we had to manually ream out each of the passageways. Whatever the issues were with that vehicle, it would have been far better to repair the actual problem than trying to fix it with what was likely an off-brand Stop-Leak product.

The same is true for engine oil stop-leak. These are designed to swell worn seals or gaskets that might be leaking – but in the long run they can cause more damage to seals that were working effectively. Again, the correct solution is to properly fix whatever seal or gasket is leaking – don’t rely on a chemical for a simple fix. There are stop-leak products for every fluid in your automobile or truck. And I don’t know of any mechanic that would advise

them as the first course of action to take.

If the dust boot on your rack and pinion rips, fix that before dirt gets into the system. Pouring in stop-leak may not cause additional problems in this system, but if dirt has scratched the piston, stop-leak will not cure the problem. The same is true with your differential if it is leaking – seals are not that expensive – get them fixed rather than using the proverbial ‘mechanic in a can’ as many people refer to stop-leak products.

Can they work? Yes. But in my opinion, if you are planning to keep your vehicle for any length of time it is far better to correct the problem than adding one of these products. If you do choose to try one, a word of caution – follow the directions exactly!